

# Physical Changes at Puberty

## *Lesson Plan*

**Resource:** H&PE Elementary Resources

**Unit:** Human Development and Sexual Health

**Grade(s):** 4

**Lesson:** 3 of 4

## H&PE Curriculum Expectations

**2019 H&PE Curriculum Expectations:** A1.1, A1.5, A1.6, D1.5, D2.5

## Materials

- Access to a shared document (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool)
- KWL Charts from Lesson 2
- Sticky notes from Lesson 2
- **[Teacher Resource: Anecdotal Recording Chart \(PDF\)](#)**

## Learning Goals

- We are learning about the physical changes that occur at puberty and the emotional and social impacts which may result from these changes.
- We are learning how choices we make every day can have a positive impact on our mental health during puberty.

## Overall Assessment

Using the Teacher Resource: Anecdotal Recording Chart, observe and provide written and verbal feedback on students' ability to describe the changes that occur at puberty and how their daily choices can have a positive impact on their mental health during puberty.

## Minds-On

Share the learning goals with the class and co-construct success criteria with students. Consider posting the success criteria in the learning space for reference throughout the lesson.

Use a **Think, Pair, Share** strategy and the following teacher prompt for students to recall feelings they might experience with the onset of puberty and ways to manage their feelings.

**Teacher prompt:** "What are some of the feelings a Grade 4 student might have as they start to experience changes during puberty? How can you manage these feelings and help others manage their feelings?"

*Student responses:*

- "It is normal to feel embarrassed, awkward or self-conscious as our body changes."
- "It can also be an exciting time to learn about how our body works."
- "It is great that we also get to be more independent and take more responsibility for caring for our body like deciding the types of hygiene products we might want to use."
- "Sometimes it can be confusing and more emotional, and some of the feelings can be scary."
- "It's helpful to try to notice our feelings and why we are feeling that way and we shouldn't be embarrassed to ask questions and talk with someone we trust."
- "We can help others manage their feelings by telling them that everything they are feeling is ok and that they can talk to us, or we can suggest they talk to someone they trust."
- "We can also get more information about how our body is changing so we understand the changes."

## Action

Have students remain in their pairs. Distribute the sticky notes from Lesson 2 equally to pairs. Post the following headings for students to view: “Physical Changes”, “Emotional Impact”, and “Social Impact”. Have pairs first review their sticky notes to place their sticky notes appropriately under one of the three headings.

Once all sticky notes have been placed, review the changes to clarify and extend student understanding of the physical changes and emotional and social impact of these changes during puberty.

Remind students that not everyone will experience puberty the same way; that is, they may not experience all the same emotions and social or physical changes to the same degree as others. Learning how to identify their feelings and using healthy strategies to cope with these changes can have a positive impact on their mental health.

Lead a large group discussion using the following prompt for students to consider how the choices they make every day can have a positive impact on their mental health as they experience puberty.

**Teacher prompt:** “Mental health is a big part of overall health. There are some other things that you can do to take care of your mental health, especially when you are experiencing the physical, emotional and social changes that may happen during puberty. What are some of the things you can do every day to take care of yourself, mentally?”

*Student responses:*

- “Just being aware of our mental health and how we are feeling is a good start. We can do a self-check-in to identify how we are feeling in different situations.”
- “By paying attention to how we are feeling and how different things can make us feel, we can be prepared for ups and downs that we are experiencing as our body grows and changes and our friends might change.”
- “We can think of ways to help us feel better like getting enough sleep and spending time with friends, rather than using our technology to communicate with them.”

- “We can get help from someone else when we need to, or get involved in community projects to give to others. This can make us feel like we are part of the community and helping others always makes people feel better.”
- “Different people do different things to take care of themselves. I think physical activity helps everyone, but at different levels. For some people, a game of cricket might help, and for others, it might be a quiet walk.”
- “Deep breathing is a strategy that can help. Using an app that helps with mindfulness or doing something creative, like drawing, can also help our mental health.”

## Consolidation

Use an **Elbow Partner** strategy to have students decide on two strategies that they would use to cope with the changes they might experience during puberty and to support their positive mental health.

Have students update their KWL Chart by recording additional learning from this lesson, the strategies they identified with their elbow partner, and any questions they may still have.

## Notes to Teachers

The language of “boys” and “girls” is gender interpreted, and it is more accurate to talk about anatomy rather than gender and use “bodies with” or “people with” language when referring to developments and changes in puberty. In addition, using the language of body parts (rather than boy/girl, male/female) allows for discussion of the diversity of people’s body parts and how they experience puberty (e.g., people who are intersexed). It can be helpful to use the language such as “many girls have \_\_, but not all girls” when students ask more specific questions.

Biologically speaking, not everyone is born exclusively male or female. Some people are born intersex, which means that they may have chromosomes and/or hormones and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics of both male and female in various degrees. (*Adapted from: Rainbow Health Ontario (2020).*

**Glossary.**)

Some people do not feel that their physical body matches their gender identity, which may lead to increased stress and body image concerns as their body undergoes puberty. Those who experience these feelings may identify as transgender, transsexual, or another identity altogether.

For additional information, consult your local public health unit website or refer to these websites:

- [\*\*Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights: Taking care of our bodies\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Egale Canada\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Every Body Curious\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Intersex Society of North America: What is intersex?\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Rainbow Health Ontario: Intersex health fact sheet\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Shore Centre: Inclusive Sex Ed Language Checklist\*\*](#)
- [\*\*The Canadian Center for Gender+Sexual Diversity\*\*](#)